

On Decision of Character.

You remember how this effect of desertion is represented in Charles de Moor.* His father's supposed cruel rejection consigned him irretrievably to the career of atrocious enterprise, in which, notwithstanding the most interesting emotions of humanity and tenderness, he persisted with heroic determination till he considered his destiny as accomplished.

Success tends considerably to reinforce this commanding quality. It is true that a man possessing it in a high degree will not lose it by occasional failure; for if the failure was caused by something entirely beyond the reach of human knowledge and ability, he will remember that fortitude is the virtue required in meeting unfavourable events which in no sense depended on him ; if by something which *might* have been known and prevented, he will feel that even the experience of failure completes his competence by admonishing his prudence, and enlarging his understanding. But as schemes and measures of action rightly adjusted to their proposed ends will generally attain them, continual failure would show something essentially wrong in a man's system, and destroy his confidence, or else expose it as mere absurdity or obstinacy. On the contrary, when a man has ascertained by experiment the justness of his calculations and the extent of his powers, when he has measured his force with various persons, when he has braved and vanquished difficulty, and partly seized the prize, he will carry forward the result of all this in an intrepid self-sufficiency for whatever may yet await him.

In some men, whose lives have been spent in constant perils, continued success has produced a confidence beyond its rational effect, by inspiring a presumption that the common laws of human affairs were, in their case, superseded by the decrees of a peculiar destiny, securing them from almost the possibility of disaster; and this superstitious feeling, though it has displaced the unconquerable resolution from its rational basis, has often produced the most wonderful effects. This dictated Caesar's expression to the mariner who was terrified at the storm and billows, " What art thou

* A wildly extravagant, certainly, but most imposing and giant? Character in Schiller's tragedy, *The Robbery*